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FALLOUT ONLINE

Apocalypse when? The MMO's fate finally revealed

"We don't have that finger-in-ear crap any more"

Cliff Bleszinski on Gears Of War: Judgment

BLACK OPS 2 IN BAD TASTE?

The controvesy explored and new gameplay details

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Apocalypse When?

After six years in development hell, just what has become of Fallout Online? games™ investigates its troubled history

Although *The Elder Scrolls Online* has only recently been announced and looks very interesting indeed, it's somewhat strange that it would be the first MMO to be announced by Bethesda's new studio Zenimax Online, given that a *Fallout* MMO has been in development, on and off, for at least a decade. Of course, there are reasons for this. Though Bethesda now fully owns the rights to the *Fallout* series, that hasn't always been the case. It has acquired ownership of the IP, bit by bit, over the past eight years, and only recently secured the rights to the *Fallout* MMO after a lengthy legal war of attrition with original developer Interplay. As such, the story of *Fallout Online* doesn't begin with the forthcoming announcement; it arguably ends with it…

The idea of a *Fallout* MMO dates back further than you may first think – as far back as the late Nineties, in fact. Riding high on the success of the first two *Fallout* games, and inspired by the popularity of early MMO breakthroughs like *Ultima Online* and *Everquest*, Interplay floated the idea of making its post-apocalyptic RPG into a massively multiplayer experience.

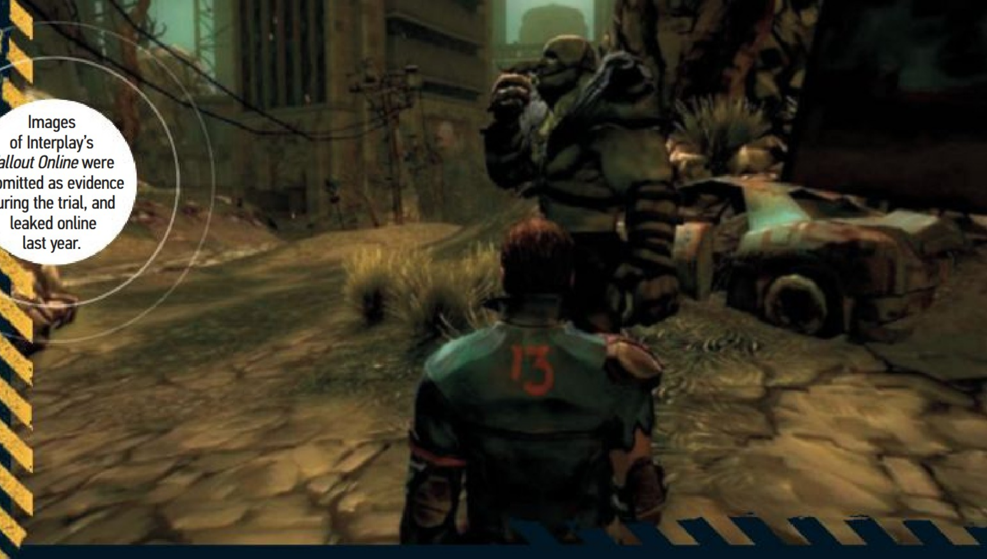
"Gamespot had run a poll asking which game the gamers would have most liked to have seen in an MMO, and *Fallout* was number one," says Brian Fargo, Interplay founder and executive producer of Fallout. "This was over *The Sims*, *Wing Commander*, et cetera. I was certainly interested in pursuing this idea."

Fargo approached Feargus Urquhart – director of the first two *Fallout* games at Black Isle Studios and now CEO of Obsidian Entertainment – with his idea, but Urquhart wasn't quite as enthusiastic as those Gamespot readers. "My answer was no," he tells us. "I didn't feel MMOs were the type of games that Black Isle made and I didn't feel that Interplay had the resources (money) to really make it right at the time. So, after I said no it was turned over to a different group and I didn't hear anything else about it for years."

"Having Feargus say no would hardly deter me," adds Fargo. "MMOs did not cost 100 million dollars in the late Nineties, but regardless we were not in a good financial position to take advantage, so no doubt the timing was bad." Following Black Isle's rejection of the idea, the task of developing a *Fallout* MMO is believed to have fallen to Engage, an Interplay company founded in 1996 to create online games, but went nowhere as Interplay continued to experience financial difficulties.

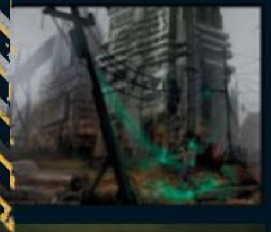
Original *Fallout* designer Tim Cain also remembers this time, and shares Urquhart's opinion. "I don't remember much," he concedes. "I didn't interact much with Engage, but I do remember warning them that a game built around the player being a solitary wanderer in a lonely wasteland might not be the best choice for an MMO. That and the name *Fallout Online* had an unfortunate acronym: FOOL."

Whatever Fargo's ambitions, they were not to be played out at Interplay. Those financial difficulties got much worse as the company struggled to transition into the burgeoning console market, and the developer was eventually acquired by French publisher Titus. Within years, the Interplay empire was almost entirely dismantled. Fargo departed the company in 2001 after several disagreements with new owners Herve and Eric Caen, and Black Isle Studios was shut down completely in 2003, its unfinished *Fallout 3* shelved permanently. The series seemed dead, but then something unexpected happened. The *Elder Scrolls* developer showed an interest in the series and, in 2004, licensed the rights to develop their own *Fallout 3*.



Images of Interplay's *Fallout Online* were submitted as evidence during the trial, and leaked online last year.

> **"Fallout was a mash-up of the style and quirky humor of Terry Gilliam's Brazil and the Western-themed post apocalyptic adventure of the Road Warrior"**



As interest in Bethesda's *Fallout 3* grew in tandem with Interplay's ailing fortunes, the entire *Fallout* IP was eventually sold to Bethesda in 2007, with two caveats: Interplay would retain the right to publish and sell existing releases *Fallout*, *Fallout 2* and *Fallout Tactics* and, more interestingly, it retained a licence to create its own *Fallout* MMO. By 2008, with the incredible success of *Fallout 3* assured, these rights must have seemed like a licence to print money.

Yet holding onto those rights wasn't exactly going to be easy. In order to retain the rights, Interplay needed to have begun development by April 2009, as well as needing to acquire $30 million in development funds. If these requirements were not met then the rights would default back to Bethesda. The same year this agreement was made, Bethesda founded MMO developer Zenimax Online Studios. The publisher's intentions seemed clear.

Despite all odds seemingly stacking against it, however, Interplay forged ahead with its *Fallout* MMO plans and, in November 2007, it re-opened in-house development and hired Jason Anderson, lead designer and artist on the original *Fallout*, to lead what it called *Project V13*, an MMO named after the unlucky-for-some vault of *Fallout*.

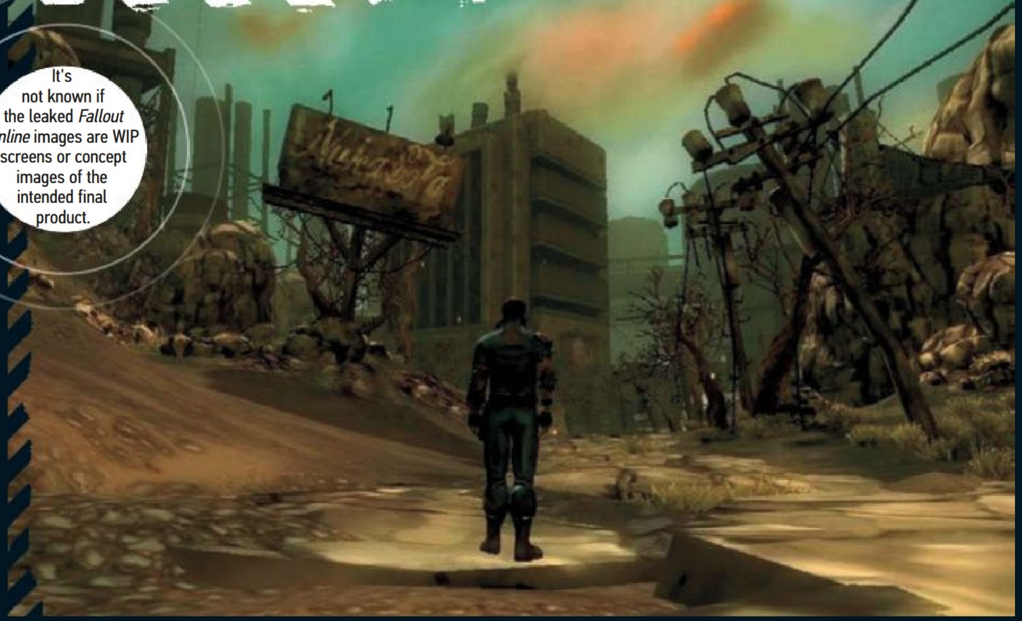
Anderson had previously left Interplay in 1998 to co-found Troika Games, worked on a number of critically acclaimed PC RPGs and even pitched against Bethesda for the license to *Fallout 3*, until the studio closed down in 2005 after a string of commercially disappointing releases. "Following Troika Games' demise, I was disenchanted with the game industry and took some time to off to be with my family," Anderson tells us. "After a couple of years, I heard through the grapevine that Hervé [Caen] was looking into getting the project off the ground. I contacted him to see if I could be of help. *Fallout* had changed so much since 1997 and it was exciting to write, giving me the chance to get out there what *Fallout* was originally about."

As he suggests, Anderson felt that some of the original *Fallout*'s tone had been lost over the years, and it was this that he hoped to recapture in *Project V13*. "Stylistically," he says, "it was going to be truer to the original vision of *Fallout*, even going as far as having the rendering style of a graphic novel. Early on in *Fallout*'s development, Leonard [Boyarsky] really wanted us to capture the rendering style Geoff Darrow's work in the *Hard Boiled* comics. Though we were able to get some of the retro elements, there was no way to create the inked heavy detail with the graphic technology available at the time."

Right in the middle of the design phase, Bethesda's *Fallout 3* was released to critical acclaim and took the series off in a bold new direction, but *Project V13* remained an online interpretation of the first *Fallout*. "My goal was to remain true to the original vision," says Anderson, "though admittedly, I am not sure if that is what all of the *Fallout* fans would have liked, but that is the vision I chose to go with. I felt it was a lot cooler than the direction the sequels had ended up going."

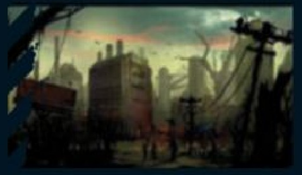
Anderson elaborates: "*Fallout* was a mash-up of the style and quirky humor of Terry Gillian's *Brazil* and the western-themed post-apocalyptic adventure of *The Road Warrior*. The Fifties kitsch came in later. *Fallout 3* ended up being a mash-up of the kitschy *Fallout* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. This all being said, I don't see it as a bad thing, *Fallout* took on a life of its own and that's cool. Though, I'm obviously partial to the original. I grew up in the Eighties and love 'post-apocalyptic adventure', not 'post-apocalyptic I-might-as-well-shoot-myself-in-the-head-because-everything-sucks'."

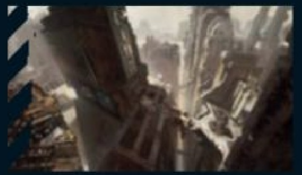
Both Interplay's *Road Warrior*-inspired *Fallout* and Bethesda's videogame take on *The Road* in *Fallout 3* had one thing in common, though – they both cast the player as lone warrior in a hostile environment. Anderson agrees that this seemed to go completely against the idea of a massively multiplayer online game. "Incorporating *Fallout* into an MMO environment is in a lot of ways the antithesis of the original design," he says. "*Fallout* was about being a lone wanderer, which you are not going to be in an MMO. It was also about deep, meaningful quests that impact the entire world, something not really suited for MMOs either. So creating a *Fallout* MMO was intriguing and challenging. For instance, while *Fallout* was all about you being the lone hero, the post-apocalyptic genre is more about survivors banding together for survival, which does work well within an MMO.

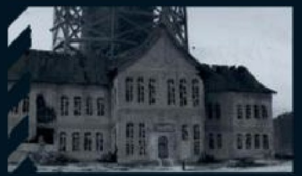


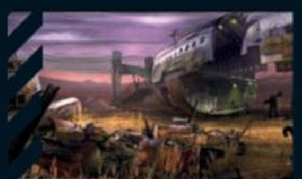
It's not known if the leaked *Fallout Online* images are WIP screens or concept images of the intended final product.

> "Throughout production it became increasingly evident that Bethesda had no intention of letting this game go forward"









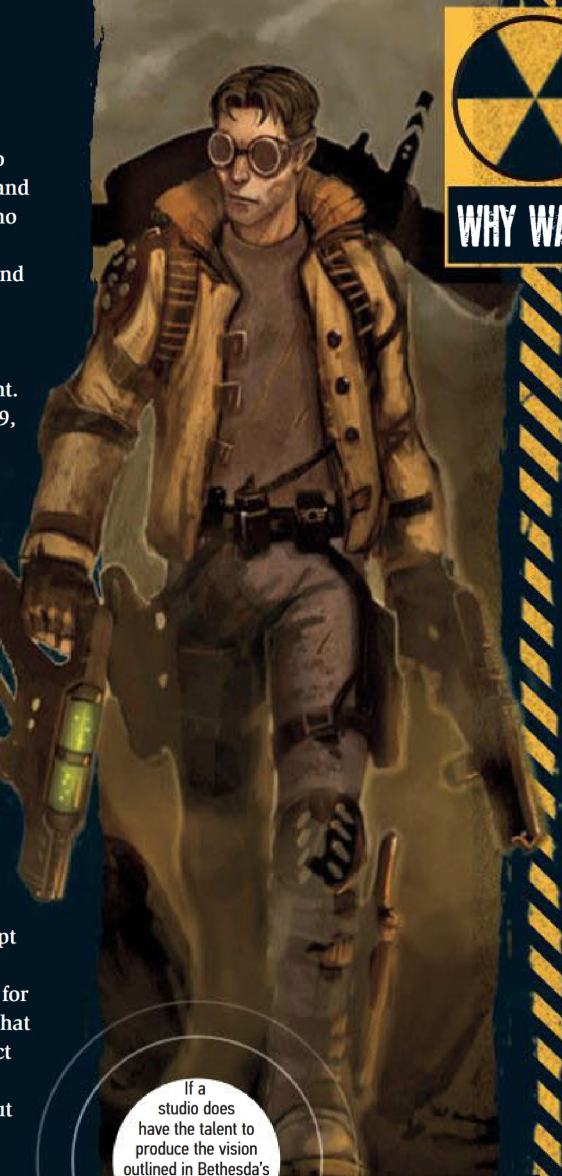
"I took special care in focusing on the social aspects of MMOs, aiming to take it to the next level," Anderson continues. "Many mechanics were built into the design with the goal of strengthening the social bonds between players, since that is really what an MMO is all about. But don't worry; there was an equal effort put into the PvP experience. The world of *PV13* would have been a brutal world." It really seems as though *Project V13* would have managed the impossible – a massively multiplayer game that also felt lonely. Much like the classic films and books of the post-apocalyptic genre, not every inhabitant of the world would have been one you could trust, creating huge potential for a genre that rarely, if ever, experiments with its social side.

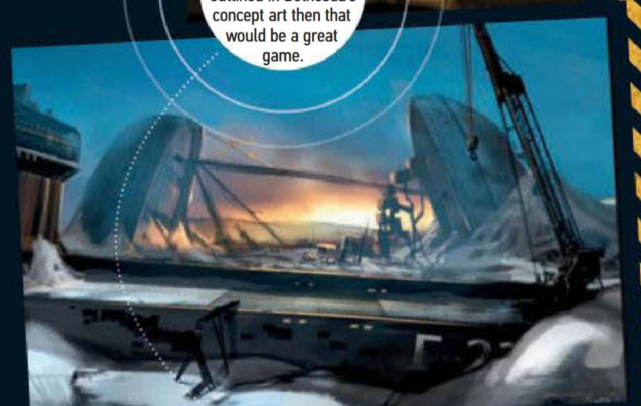
Sadly, Anderson's plans, much like Fargo's, were not to be. Production initially went well, according to Anderson, but it didn't last. "It was a very small team," he says. "We would spend half the day meeting on design and the other half of the day writing up documents on what was decided. The major problem was getting anything approved by Bethesda. And sadly, there was no breakthrough. Throughout production it became increasingly evident that Bethesda had no intention of letting this game go forward. It was impossible to get anything approved through Bethesda, a condition required of the contract with Interplay. They would ignore our requests and not respond at all. It felt to me that they had no intention of allowing the game to go forward. In looking over the contract between Interplay and Bethesda, it became very clear to me that Bethesda had no intention of ever allowing Interplay to actually create an MMO. Right about this time, Brian Fargo contacted me and asked me to come head up the *Wasteland 2* project."

This was 2009, and as Anderson departed for Fargo's InXile Entertainment he left *Project V13* fully designed and Interplay looking for investment to fund development. Which is where it all started to go wrong. By 1 April 2009, Interplay was just three days away from its deadline – to enter full development of *Fallout Online* or relinquish the licence to Bethesda. A day later, it announced a partnership with Bulgarian developer Masthead Studios to complete development of *V13* by using the same engine that Masthead had created for its own post-apocalyptic MMO, *Earthrise*. But less than two weeks later, on 15 April, Interplay received notice from Bethesda claiming that it intended to reclaim the rights to *Fallout Online* since Interplay had failed to honour the full agreement outlined in 2007. Interplay disputed the claims, and so began a lengthy legal battle that Interplay would eventually lose.

To the outside world, however, things looked promising. In June 2010 Interplay officially announced that *Project V13* was *Fallout Online* and began sending out regular newsletters about the game, including concept art, a teaser trailer and developer diaries. A beta test was even mooted. At this time, **games™** contacted Eric Caen for more details on *Fallout Online*, but Caen replied saying that the litigation between Interplay and Bethesda made direct communication with the press "problematic". Why was Interplay willing to hype *Fallout Online* in newsletters but not speak openly in the press? We can only speculate.

Bethesda's case, submitted to a Delaware court and now in the public domain, argued that Interplay had not secured anywhere near the $30 million required to fund *Fallout Online*, had supplied *Fallout*-branded materials to developer Masthead without Bethesda's permission, had failed to show evidence of a single line of *Fallout MMO* game code and, as such, its promotion of *Fallout Online* at www.fallout-on-line.com was a direct violation of Bethesda's





If a studio does have the talent to produce the vision outlined in Bethesda's concept art then that would be a great game.

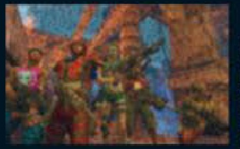
WHY WAIT?

Five post-nuclear MMOs you can play now

Fallen Earth

■ This is about as close as you'll get to a *Fallout* MMO for now. It's actually a lot like *Fallout: New Vegas* in many ways. The Hoover Dam is in it, it's deep and complex, it had loads of bugs on launch…

CrimeCraft



■ A multiplayer shooter MMO set in an urban future in which heavily armed gangs rule the streets. The two sides of the game don't blend very well, but it does at least look a bit like *Fallout*.

Earthrise

■ Initially developed by Masthead Studios, the Bulgarian team commissioned to develop a *Fallout* MMO by Interplay before lawsuits from Bethesda cancelled the project, apocalyptic sci-fi MMO *Earthrise* is now being developed by SilentFuture for a relaunch later this year.

Shin Megami Tensei: Imagine

■ This MMO spin-off of the popular Japanese RPG series, *Shin Megami Tensei: Imagine* is set in MegaTen, a world ravaged not by a nuclear apocalypse but by a demonic apocalypse.

Neo Steam: The Shattered Continent

■ This might look like your typical sexy fantasy steampunk MMO, but it's set in the aftermath of a massive, continent-shattering apocalyptic earthquake, so it definitely counts and no barrel has been scraped to fill out this boxout.

A Brief History Of Fallout Online

1996

■ Brian Fargo founds Engage, an online gaming portal and publisher.

■ Late Nineties – Brian Fargo suggests a *Fallout MMO*. Black Isle declines to develop.

1998

■ The majority of Interplay shares are acquired by French publisher Titus.

2000

Brian Fargo leaves Interplay and Titus's Herve Caen takes over as CEO.

■ *Fallout Tactics* developer Micro Forte is apparently contracted to develop a *Fallout* MMO that never goes anywhere.

2004

■ Bethesda Softworks licenses the right to develop *Fallout 3* from a struggling Interplay.

2006

■ Nov 2006 - Interplay's intention to develop a *Fallout* MMO is made public through paperwork submitted to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.

2007

■ Apr 2007 - Bethesda buys up the full rights to the *Fallout* series and Interplay licences the right to develop its *Fallout* MMO.

■ Aug 2007 – Zenimax Online, the MMO focused partner of Bethesda, is opened for business under the guidance of *Dark Age Of Camelot* designer Matt Firor.

■ Nov 2007 - *Original Fallout* designer Jason Anderson joins Bethesda to concept *Project V13*.

2008

■ Jun 2008 – The Interactive Game Group purchases 2 million shares of Interplay as part of an agreement to develop a game, thought to be *Project V13*.

■ Oct 2008 – *Fallout 3* is released.

2009

■ Apr 2009 – Bethesda begins legal proceedings intending to reclaim the *Fallout* MMO rights and accuses of Interplay of breaching the terms of its licence agreement.

■ Apr 2009 – As the agreed deadline for commencement of full production approaches, Interplay announces that Masthead Studios will develop *Project V13*.

2010

■ June 2010 – *Project V13* is officially revealed to be *Fallout Online*.

■ Oct 2010 – *Fallout: New Vegas* is released.

2012

■ Jan 2012 – The *Fallout* MMO rights are finally restored to Bethesda.

■ May 2012 – *The Elder Scrolls Online* is announced.

2013

■ Apr 2013 – The final date by which Interplay's *Fallout Online* should have been released if legally continued.

2014

■ Oct 2014 – Predicted release of *Fallout 4*.

2015

■ Dec 2015 – Predicted released of *Fallout Online*.

copyright as of April 2009. With public records supporting Bethesda's claims that Interplay lacked significant capital, and a judge dismissing Masthead's ability to testify in court, Interplay was left without a compelling defense and was eventually found to have not met the terms of the April 2007 licensing agreement for the *Fallout* MMO. And in January 2012, Bethesda announced that it had finally regained the licence to the *Fallout* MMO. Only the right to sell the first three Fallout games remained with Interplay, though this right will expire in December 2013.

So where does this leave *Project V13*? The licensing agreement with Bethesda states that any part of the MMO not relating to copyrighted *Fallout* material remains with Interplay. So the company could, in theory, complete development of Jason Anderson's proposed post-apocalyptic MMO in an original world with new backstory and characters. Is this a possibility? *Project V13* is still advertised on Masthead's official website, while a public *V13* forum is still active on Interplay's site. But it remains true that Interplay's financial difficulties leave it ill-equipped to develop a successful and significant MMO. Both Interplay and Masthead were contacted by **games™** on this matter but declined to comment.

Which only leaves Bethesda and Zenimax Online. With the rights to *Fallout Online* now under the same roof as *Fallout 3*, it is surely time for Zenimax to show its hand. "I'd be surprised if they weren't thinking about it at least," says the sage *Fallout 2* and *New Vegas* designer Chris Avellone. "They went to the legal battlegrounds for a reason."

Naturally, we asked Bethesda to comment, but the answers from the studio's executive producer Todd Howard are wooly at best. On the subject of the *Project V13* design done to date, he says, "I don't think that work transferred to Bethesda, but I'm not sure," while his comment about the current status of a new *Fallout Online* skillfully sidesteps the issue. "Our studio, Bethesda Game Studios, doesn't plan on making MMOs, so I can't really say what the overall company may do with it," he says, at once denying his own involvement without commenting on what Zenimax Online might be up to.

So how far away might a new *Fallout Online* be? By Bethesda's estimates, as outlined in its 2007 agreement with Interplay, it would expect a *Fallout* MMO to be completed and commercially released within four years of the start of full development, allowing for an extra two years for pre-production and resource acquisition. Does that suggest a *Fallout Online* release date of 2018? We doubt it very much. It's hard to believe that Zenimax doesn't have the funds to enter full development whenever it likes, while the existence of Zenimax Online, now in its sixth year of operation, suggests that a technical infrastructure, game engine and experienced development team are already in place. Bethesda itself estimated a minimum development team of 55 members in order to create a *Fallout* MMO in 2009, and we know that Zenimax Online currently has over 200 employees. Could it have two games in different stages of development at once? We wouldn't rule it out. *The Elder Scrolls Online* needs to be finished first before Zenimax would be willing to confirm a new MMO, of course. But after that, we wouldn't be surprised to see *Fallout Online* released as soon as 2015. Only around fifteen years after Brian Fargo first thought up the idea. Let's hope it's worth the wait.

A Vision Of The Future

What we expect from Bethesda's Fallout Online

More Of The Same

■ THE *FALLOUT* SERIES is one that has survived multiple generations, adapting to different styles of RPG because its setting, backstory and characters have always remained at its heart. As such, *Fallout* director Feargus Urquhart tells us that this is the key to making *Fallout* work as an MMO. "The *Fallout* brand already made a big transition from the early *Fallout* games to *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas*," he says. "It was able to do so because the later games embraced what *Fallout* is – a crazy, post-apocalyptic, Fifties-inspired, survivalist, wild west wasteland with the charm of the Vault Boy. Sticking to that and not straying from it is what would make a *Fallout Online* successful."

America Online

■ ONE OF THE most interesting things about *The Elder Scrolls Online* is that it brings together previous *Elder Scrolls* locations like Morrowind and Skyrim in one game, which makes sense for a genre as vast as the MMO. It would make sense for *Fallout Online* to therefore cover several parts of the post-nuclear USA, incorporating familiar locations such as the New California Republic, the Capital Wasteland and New Vegas in one game. But what time period would they take place in? Set the game before the other *Fallout* games and any gameworld changes expressed by players potentially become non-canonical. The history of the series isn't far reaching enough for an *Old Republic*-style solution, so a setting a few hundred years after the other games makes the most sense.

Nuka Cola
FIRST LADY SAVES WASHINGTON
RECKSON

Narrative Focus

■ "THERE MIGHT BE some interesting ideas to explore in an MMO where the player needs to feel isolated and alone, but in truth, the single-player version of the game interests me much more," says *Fallout* designer Tim Cain. And he certainly isn't alone in his opinion. A sense of isolation is important to *Fallout* fans, so perhaps Jason Anderson's idea of making players hostile toward each other will survive the transition to Bethesda. We wouldn't too surprised to see Zenimax Online take a similar approach to *Star Wars: The Old Republic* too, creating a massively multiplayer game that can be played alone, with just as much narrative content and voiced dialogue as *Fallout 3*.

Free-to-play

■ WHILE *THE ELDER Scrolls Online* is likely to follow a subscription model, at least to begin with, expect it to be one of the last of its kind. Free-to-play appears to be the future, not just for MMOs but for many types of games, but with MMOs way ahead of the curve they will make the full transition first. If *Fallout Online* is released as late as 2015, we'd fully expect it to be free-to-play. What's more interesting though is how Zenimax would choose to monetise the game, and whether it could do so in a way that actually enriches the player experience. Having to pay for Nuka Cola bottle caps would be an obvious example that, if handled intelligently, could actually emphasise *Fallout*'s harsh, resource-light setting.

Public dungeons

■ *THE ELDER SCROLLS Online* director Matt Firor has revealed a taste for the public dungeons used by *Everquest* but since abandoned in favour of instanced quests, and intends to reinstate them in *TESO*. Don't be surprised if they appear in *Fallout Online* too. The world of *Fallout* has potential to do interesting things with player interaction. Do you want to form fragile alliances, temporarily helping each other out in fear that one might screw over the other in the end? You should be able to. Do you want to stalk another player through a dungeon, waiting for them to die before you loot their corpses in desperation? These, and more, are the sorts of things a *Fallout* MMO should do.

All concept art is taken from development of Interplay's *Fallout Online*, and is in no way representative of Bethesda's vision for the licence.

Worldwide consequence

■ ONE OF THE defining qualities of the *Fallout* series is that it attaches meaningful consequences to player actions. An MMO would naturally have to feature such choice and consequence on a massive scale, which is certainly ambitious. But ambition is not stranger to this series anyway. *Fallout: New Vegas* featured its own fantastic sense of cause and effect, with player actions determining the political landscape of the area. Now imagine that with every player affecting the way the world works. *Eve Online* already does similar things with its economy to huge acclaim so an even greater sense of global consequence would be very welcome.

The RETRO Guide To… Fallout

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Fallout is a rare series – one that started out revolutionary and continued to evolve. **games™** sat down with Brian Fargo, Tim Cain, Feargus Urquhart, Todd Howard and Chris Avellone to discuss the making of every core Fallout game so far

1997 – FALLOUT

What's the connection between *Fallout* and its spiritual predecessor, *Wasteland*?

Brian Fargo: The only reason there was a *Fallout* was because I was unable to acquire the rights from EA to make a *Wasteland 2*. *Fallout* was my direct response to that situation and we captured many elements from *Wasteland* in the *Fallout* series.

Tim Cain: I had not played *Wasteland* before I started work on *Fallout*, but a lot of the team had played it and of course, there were people like Alan Pavlish and Bill Heineman around the office who had actually worked on the game. We liked to talk about what features we enjoyed in the game, such as its morally vague quests and its open world, and we debated about party-based combat and super loot squares. In the end, we were inspired by *Wasteland*, but *Fallout* was more of a re-imagining of the post-nuclear genre.

Fantasy RPGs had been the bread and butter of the genre since *Dungeons & Dragons*. What inspired the post-apocalyptic sci-fi theme?

Brian Fargo: *The Road Warrior* is one of my favourite movies of all time and I have always personally had strong feelings about the genre. I used to read *Kamandi: The Last Boy On Earth* as a kid, *The Omega Man* was one of my favourite movies and *The Swan Song* is still a top book for me. I have always been fascinated by a reset of mankind to a sort of dark ages but with technology.

What aspects of the RPG genre were you attempting to improve or overhaul with *Fallout*?

Tim Cain: I wanted a big open world, and I wanted the player to decide who his character was and how he would act, not the designer. I wanted quests and the main storyline to have multiple solutions and endings, not only to encourage replayability, but to support whatever decisions the player has made. The fact that later games emulated some of these design choices tells me that we made the right decisions.

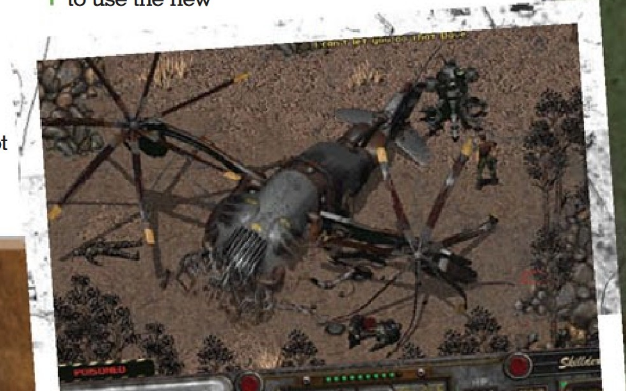
By 1997, other PC RPGs like *The Elder Scrolls* had already made the leap to 3D. Why did *Fallout* stay 2D?

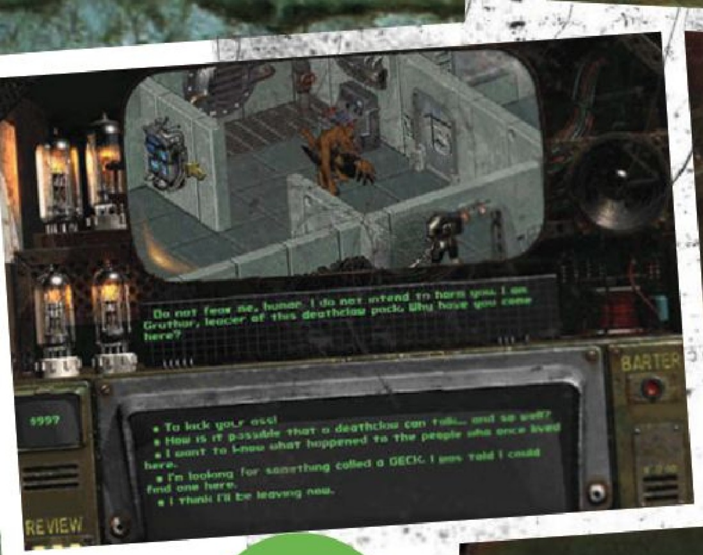
Tim Cain: The games I loved at the time, like *X-COM* or *Crusader*, were isometric. I like the way an isometric view gives the player the ability to see the field of combat in a way that first person does not. And as far as 2D versus 3D goes, at that time in the mid-Nineties you could not get anywhere near the level of detail in a character using a 3D model as you could in a sprite.

Brian, do you know why the deal to use Steve Jackson's GURPS RPG system fell through mid-development?

Brian Fargo: Yes, I know exactly how it fell through since I am the one that pulled the trigger on it. We had sent Mr. Jackson a snippet of the opening movie that had the citizen being shot in the back of the head while the music from the Ink Spots played. Well, Mr. Jackson was very opposed to the violence and insisted we remove it and I was unwilling to do so, so we agreed to part ways. I respect his desire to have his licence associated with whatever material he wanted, but I knew the tone of *Fallout* was going to be harsher than the opening movie so I saw no point in moving forward. My thought at the time was, 'You haven't seen anything yet.'

Feargus Urquhart: In the end, we decided to go our separate ways, and in a couple of weeks three or four of us came up with an entirely new RPG system for the game – SPECIAL. We then had to retrofit the game to use the new





Do not fear me, human. I do not intend to harm you. I am Gruthar, leader of this deathclaw pack. Why have you come here?

- To kick your ass!
- How is it possible that a deathclaw can talk... and so well?
- I want to know what happened to the people who once lived here.
- I'm looking for something called a GECK. I was told I could find one here.
- I think I'll be leaving now.

Fallout's interactive dialogue is a cornerstone of the series and has only improved on its quality origins with time.

system, which was much easier than we had anticipated because of how both Tim Cain and Chris Jones had architected the game.

How did the original GURPS system differ to the SPECIAL system we're now familiar with?
Tim Cain: GURPS was a lot more complex than SPECIAL, and that meant we received a lot of feedback from QA as the testers strove to understand these complexities. I remember one tester asked me why some characters could shoot better than others, even though they had the same points in the Guns skill. I told him that his Dexterity stat played a part in the final calculation but he got a bonus from his Intelligence stat too, but the two stats were applied differently. He was unhappy at this answer, and I remember being worried that the system might be too complex for many players.

And what did you prefer about the SPECIAL system?
Tim Cain: The simplicity of SPECIAL made it easy to code and easy to explain to other people, but it still allowed for a rich diversity of characters to be made. And the fact that it was home-grown for our game made it endearing to me. I had to fight a little to get Luck in there, though. A few people didn't like this stat, claiming it was too vague, but I liked giving the player a little control over the 'unknowable' in the game – things like critical hits, discoveries and encounters.

> "I wanted a big open world, and I wanted the player to decide who his character was and how he would act, not the designer"

What would you say was the biggest challenge of creating *Fallout*?
Tim Cain: I had never made anything so ambitiously big before. Since I didn't get a team to start out with, I had to write an engine, which included the blitters, the animation controllers, the timers, the event handlers, the sound system, the input layer, everything. On top of that there was creating an original IP, developing a storyline, and inventing characters and quests, but luckily people were joining the *Fallout* group by then. As if that was not enough, I was the producer as well, so I was expected to make reports and manage schedules. Frankly, I would have collapsed if someone had told me all of the stuff I was expected to do. Instead, I just barged ahead and got things done.

All that hard work was worth it though…
Chris Avellone: The finished game was revolutionary. It changed what I thought RPGs could be. It had so many brilliant design choices, such as intelligence affecting dialogue, Perks, and even minor elements like planting explosives with Pickpocket, and it had a big impact on how I did dialogue design in *Planescape: Torment*. The idea of checking so many skills and abilities and then causing Karma/alignment changes in mechanics and in the attitude of the person you were talking to was important to me, and *Fallout* was the title that opened my eyes to the possibilities.

Skilldex
HP
203
AC
045
AP 4
INV
MAP
CHA
PIP
TURN
CMBT

forceful blow.
•Metzger was killed.
•You've killed the leader of the Slave Guild.
•You gain 1500 experience points.

Feargus Urquhart: The biggest achievement of *Fallout* was to really put people in another world where they got to play the kind of role they wanted to play. Most previous RPGs had let you play classes like *Fighter* or *Thief*, but those classes all really came down to how the player's character did damage. In *Fallout* you could play a Combat character, a Thief Character or a Talking Character, and the game supported you winning while acting in one of those roles. *Fallout* let you beat the end boss without firing a shot.

1998 – FALLOUT 2

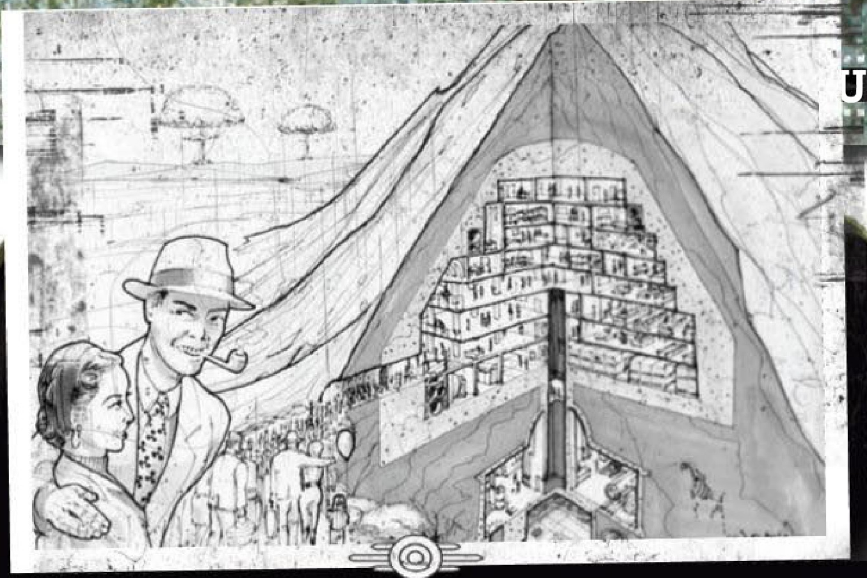
***Fallout 2* was made at Interplay, just like the first game, but it was made by an almost entirely new team. Why?**
Brian Fargo: *Fallout 2* was a very different team dynamic and the guys did a wonderful job considering the difficulty of the circumstances. The original producer and art director originally didn't want to make the sequel, so we put a new team in place to handle the job. But then the original guys changed their mind and we had to toss out a lot of work that was done which was somewhat demoralising. And then after a short time they changed their mind and decided to leave the company, throwing things back into disarray. It was very frustrating and I give major credit to Chris and Feargus for keeping it together and keeping the team inspired.

How did the team change affect the game's development?
Feargus Urquhart: I hate to say that it didn't have much of a change, but I am going to say that anyway. But, that is not a slight at all to the talent of Tim Cain, Leonard Boyarsky and Jason Anderson. What they and all of us had done with *Fallout* was to create such a complete and fleshed out world that *Fallout 2* almost made itself. Now it was a ton of work that we had to do very quickly to make our ship date, but the foundation was already there from *Fallout 1*.

Tim, what were your aspirations for *Fallout 2* before you left Interplay, and to what extent would you say these were realised by the finished product?
Tim Cain: I wanted to polish the game, meaning I wanted to clear out the bugs and also smooth some of the clunkier user interface elements. And I wanted to add some new big features, like a player-owned car and also a roving encounter on the world map. This encounter was big and dangerous, but you could get good items from it. And once you encountered it, you could predict where to find it again. Obviously, that never got done.

If *Fallout* laid the foundations for the mechanics of the series then *Fallout 2* is where its fictional side really came to life, right?
Tim Cain: Before *Fallout* had shipped, the idea of why the Vaults were made was brewing in my head. Even if a thousand of them were built, at huge expense, they would only house a million people or less than 0.5 per cent of the population of the country. So I imagined that the Vaults had another purpose besides just saving people, and I made a list of what kinds of Vaults might be built. Those ideas were developed in sequels.

Chris, as a writer what was it about the *Fallout* universe that you enjoyed working in?
Chris Avellone: On a minor level, I enjoy writing dialogue that can use 'hell' instead of 'hells', and 'Fuck this shit' instead of 'By the Gods!' On a larger level, *Fallout* had enough real-world ties that made the interactions more meaningful and relatable by comparison. Lastly, the fact that there were so many different ways to solve a



The Vaults of the Wasteland - And the real reason they existed

0 Combined the brains of all America's geniuses to create a supercomputer called 'The Calculator'. Which went rogue.

3 A control vault, designed to be closed for 20 years. It was kept closed too long and flooded.

8 A control vault, which opened after ten years so the residents could rebuild civilisation.

11 A control vault, which opened after ten years so the residents could rebuild civilisation.

12 The doors were not adequately sealed before The Great War, resulting in the ghoul enclave of Necropolis.

13 Designed to stay closed for 200 years to test human responses to isolation.

15 This Vault was deliberately overcrowded, and filled with a explosively diverse range of races and ideologies.

17 This Vault's inhabitants were turned into super mutants by The Master's Army. Its exact location and purpose is unknown.

19 Split inhabitants into two separate factions, with both groups made as paranoid of the other as possible.

21 All inhabitants shared equal power, and all disagreements were resolved through gambling.

22 Housed genetically altered spores, which mutated the Vault's inhabitants into Swamp Thing-like plant monsters.

34 The armoury was heavily overstocked with weapons and ammo, but wasn't locked.

76 This control Vault is mentioned in *Fallout 3* and, though undiscovered, expected to be somewhere in Pittsburgh.

77 Populated by a single man and a crate of puppets. The man's jumpsuit can be found in Paradise Falls.

87 Inhabitants were exposed to a Forced Evolutionary Virus. The resulting super mutants killed everyone else.

92 An attempt to create super soldiers using subliminal messages hidden in white noise.

101 Designed to stay closed indefinitely, this Vault housed the Vault Dweller, and was opened loads.

106 Psychoactive drugs were pumped in with the air, turning the inhabitants insane.

108 Filled with a dozen surviving clones, all called Gary, this Vault originally had a terminally ill Overseer, and no predetermined power structure for after his death.

112 Inhabitants are suspended in a virtual reality computer simulation from which they cannot escape.

Fallout and Fallout 2 are available on GOG.com but Todd Howard tells us he'd love to see remakes on XBLA or iPad.

quest based on skills and abilities enriched the role-playing experience. Dialogue was not just exposition and words, but a tool and a weapon you could use to reach your objectives, and that made me love it even more.

What were the major challenges of creating such interactive fiction so early in the genre's evolution?

Chris Avellone: Tracking the data and variables is the most difficult aspect of it. We hadn't done a title with that much reactivity before, so it required careful management of information among designers. Every area brief contained specific reactivity and hooks in-between the areas – we had the opportunity to go beyond that, and did, but having those initial connections laid out from the outset was a plus. The positive was that we'd been through the ringer at the studio with *Fallout*, so now we had an opportunity to use tricks and lessons with dialogues and quests to make them even richer. You could assassinate someone by planting explosives on a kid and then sending the kid to go talk to his parents; we could create more complicated dialogues; we had designers more prone to writing reactive barks and batch files to make implementing those dialogues easier, which really allowed much more content to be generated.

* * *

2008 – FALLOUT 3

Todd, what was it about this series in particular that attracted Bethesda to it?

Todd Howard: The setting was the first thing. I love the idea of Vault-Tec, the whole retro-sci-fi Fifties world that was destroyed. The other is that it fit the style of game we like the best. One where you are free to explore, do what you want, and are rewarded for that.

What aspects of the series did you look to keep and/or throw away?

Todd Howard: It's easy to say we wanted to preserve all of it and overhaul all of it at the same time. The first game's brilliant, we were just coming at the franchise ten years later, and you take a fresh look and ask yourself, 'What can we do to make you feel the same way you felt ten years ago?' Time and technology change how you make games and how audiences feel while playing them.

Was there anything you wanted to do that didn't make the final game?

Todd Howard: There isn't one part that we didn't redo and redo until we felt it was right. From Pip-Boy designs, vault suits, weapons, VATS, to the world itself. We cut half our city spaces. We cut a surgery system. We were pushing a 'survival' feel often, and sometimes it went too far, so we would add and remove parts.

Your greatest contribution to *Fallout* is arguably the VATS system. Where did the idea come from?

Todd Howard: One of my main concerns starting the project was, 'How do we do an RPG with real-time gunplay that felt different?' One that didn't just reward the player's ability, but his character's ability. The basic design for VATS came together pretty fast amongst a few of us. During the course of the project it became more a question of how and when it was useful in the game, where it moved beyond a visual gimmick. But the visual pay-off of how the camera angles worked, and all the conditions it had to handle, proved to be a good bit of trial and error.

* * *

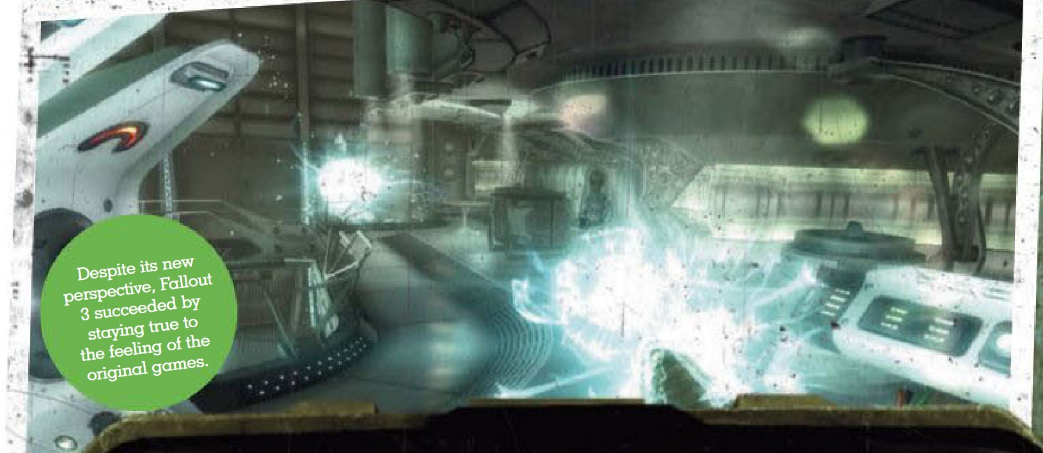
2010 – FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Many of the *Fallout: New Vegas* staff also worked on *Van Buren*, Interplay's unfinished *Fallout 3*. To what extent did you see *New Vegas* as an opportunity to realise some of your original ambitions for *Fallout 3*?

Chris Avellone: None for me – I came onto the title late. Still, a lot of plots and signposts from *Van Buren* reappeared in *New Vegas* with Caesar's Legion, the caravan wars, the mental instability caused by the Stealth Boys and more. At the same time, however, some areas evolved in new directions as a result of time. For example, the 'Big Empty/Big MT' in *Old World Blues* wasn't much like the original version in Van Buren, and the new direction was well received, regardless.

And what do you think you did on *New Vegas* that wouldn't have occurred to you or the team during the Black Isle years?

Chris Avellone: The idea of an open world you can walk across was a new element, and Arcanum was the first RPG that seemed to tackle that RPG element at Troika. I don't think replicating that or considering that is something Black Isle would have done. Everything else, however, would have fit within Black Isle's sensibilities: faction reputation, companions, town and quest structure, et cetera. It's possible we wouldn't have considered the same open story



Despite its new perspective, Fallout 3 succeeded by staying true to the feeling of the original games.

THE SPIN-OFFS

FALLOUT TACTICS

"Frankly, I am amazed that the game ever got made," says Ed Orman, designer of *Fallout Tactics*. "We had a team built from mostly noobs, myself included, a lead programmer who bailed not long after we started, a short development cycle coupled with an ambitious design, the communications problems of working across different time zones, a fanbase that was dubious about what we were doing, a publisher who might not entirely have believed in our abilities. The odds were so stacked against us, it's just astounding.

"The idea for *Tactics* came from Interplay, after we pitched a demo of a different game that happened to use an isometric engine," Orman tells us. "The engine impressed them enough that they asked us to put together a proposal for a more combat-centric *Fallout* game."

To do that, Micro Forté received some help from Interplay, but it wasn't enough. "We did get access to Chris Taylor and Chris Avellone - thanks guys! - and they both did their best to steer us in the right direction. But if you ask some fans, their involvement wasn't enough. I still think we managed to capture the spirit of *Fallout*, but we certainly slipped up on some of the details." Nevertheless, Orman's studio was able to take *Fallout* and transform it into a different sort of RPG, which remains the most overlooked game in the series. While Orman tells us he'd love to see a re-make of the game on iPad, don't hold your breath. "That'd be a huge amount of work, and I have no idea who owns the rights any more. Interplay, Bethesda?" For now, the PC version is available through Steam or on GOG.com.

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

Fallout made its console debut with this top-down PS2 shooter. Though *Brotherhood Of Steel* uses some RPG elements, such as the SPECIAL system, it is a more action-based game with linear progression rather than open-world quests. Though it has since been declared non-canonical by Bethesda, it does feature many connections to the other games, including the appearance of the first game's Vault Dweller, who can be selected as a playable character in New Game+. *Brotherhood Of Steel* ran on the Snowblind engine - like *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* - and was typical of the thinking of the time, that console RPGs had to be less deep. It took *Fallout 3*, among others, to challenge those perceptions.

STATS ITEMS DATA

THE CANCELLED FALLOUTS

UNNAMED FALLOUT SHOOTER

This top-down shooter, intended for PSone, was cancelled during pre-production. Little else is known about the project.

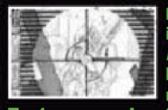
PROJECT V13

When Bethesda acquired the rights to *Fallout*, Interplay retained the rights to a *Fallout* MMO, at least for a few years, and developed such a game under the codename of *Project V13* during that time. You can read the full story of the development on page 76.

VAN BUREN

While the *Fallout 3* we know and love was made by Bethesda, there was another, developed by Black Isle but ultimately cancelled by Interplay. Chris Avellone gives us the sales pitch for a game that never was: "Through implementing another faux player character party that roams the wasteland and causes ripples with their actions just as your party does, we create a new level of antagonist-protagonist reactivity between two organic groups. Companions may leave, preferring the agenda of the other group; you may adventure down two different paths and not realise what's affecting the wasteland until much later; and utilising the game's principal theme of the Prisoner's Dilemma, we want you to discover that greater successes can be achieved, not by crushing your supposed adversaries, but learning the value of cooperation to achieve greater victories for you both."

FALLOUT EXTREME



A squad-based shooter intended for Xbox and PS2, *Fallout Extreme* would have been very tactical in nature, much like Valve's Team Fortress, and actions taken in one misson would have had consequences for the next. If finished, *Fallout Extreme* would have given a rare glimpse into the post-nuclear world outside of the USA as events took the player through China, Russia and Mongolia.

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL 2

Started before the release of the first game and cancelled in 2004, this PS2 shooter looked to take in more similarities to the original *Fallout* with branching quest lines and a reputation system to create more choice and consequence. The plot also included leftover elements from both *Van Buren* and *Fallout Tactics 2*.

FALLOUT TACTICS 2

"We didn't get too far with *FT2* before the plug was pulled," says Ed Orman. "Multiplayer was going to be a focus from the outset, with single-player developed off the back of that. It would have been isometric but fully 3D.

"We wanted to use the sequel as an opportunity to examine what we'd done with *FT1* and address what we thought were its shortcomings. For example, one thing we got a bit trapped by was trying to emulate all of the RPG elements of the original within a tactical combat game: many of them were valid to keep, but some just didn't fit well and their presence hurt us, so the renewed focus on combat was a push to rectify that."

elements as *New Vegas*, which was much more freeform than most Black Isle titles.

What would you say modern tech has done for you, as an interactive writer, that helped make *New Vegas* what it is?
Chris Avellone: Mostly pissed me off. You can't write as many reactions because every line is more expensive when it needs to be said out loud. I could never have written all the reactive text and token text in *Fallout 2* if it had been *Fallout: New Vegas* – it's not technically possible to use the player's real name, nor is it financially worthwhile to record 100 lines per hooker where they address the player by their Mob Boss nickname for fun. Wouldn't happen, nope.

What about *Fallout: New Vegas* are you most proud of?
Chris Avellone: Technically, the fact we had a larger narrative arc and made four separate DLCs into one cohesive whole. Thanks to Bethesda, we were able to do this because we knew we'd be able to do four DLCs and could plan them out in this fashion. Aesthetically, I loved writing Dr. Mobius in *Old World Blues*. DLC is also a nice way to address concerns about the original game and expand the experience with new level caps, weapon balance, patches, and even new features that players may be hungering for: a new home base in *Old World Blues*, new implants, or even a place to dump all those coffee cups and pencils you find in the core game.

◆

201X – FALLOUT 4?

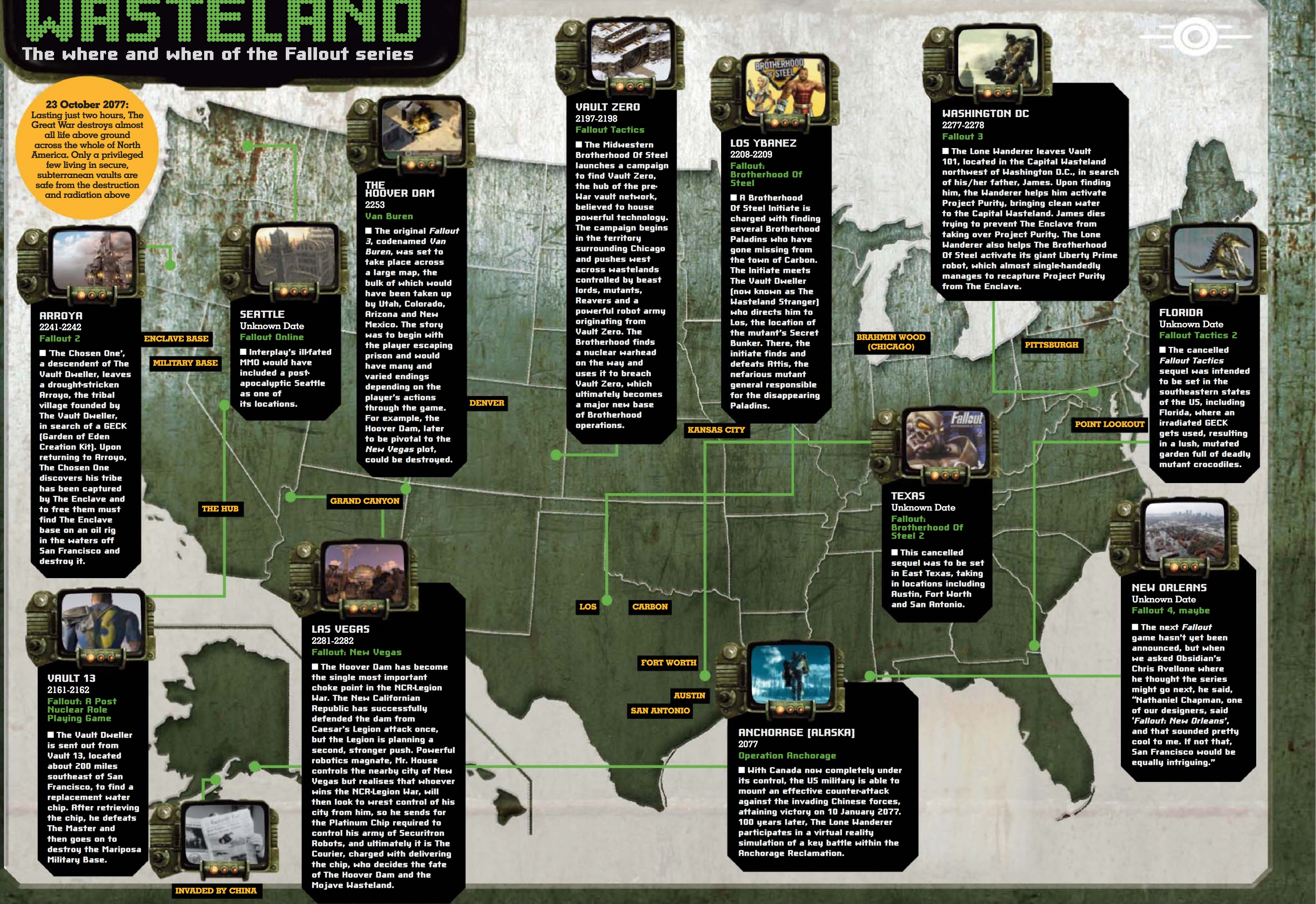
What would you like to see from the series in the future?
Chris Avellone: Nathaniel Chapman, one of our designers, said *Fallout: New Orleans*, and that sounded pretty cool to me. If not that, San Francisco would be equally intriguing.

Feargus Urquhart: For Obsidian, it would be great to get an opportunity to make another *New Vegas*. There are always ideas we don't get to when we are making games and getting another crack at *Fallout* on our side of the United States would be great.

Tim Cain: I have made a design for a new *Fallout* game, in the spirit of *Fallout 1* and *2*, but I don't really talk about that design with anyone. That way, if I see those features show up in another game, I can think 'great minds think alike'.

THE AMERICAN WASTELAND

The where and when of the Fallout series



23 October 2077: Lasting just two hours, The Great War destroys almost all life above ground across the whole of North America. Only a privileged few living in secure, subterranean vaults are safe from the destruction and radiation above

ARROYA
2241-2242
Fallout 2

■ 'The Chosen One', a descendent of The Vault Dweller, leaves a drought-stricken Arroyo, the tribal village founded by The Vault Dweller, in search of a GECK (Garden of Eden Creation Kit). Upon returning to Arroyo, The Chosen One discovers his tribe has been captured by The Enclave and to free them must find The Enclave base on an oil rig in the waters off San Francisco and destroy it.

SEATTLE
Unknown Date
Fallout Online

■ Interplay's ill-fated MMO would have included a post-apocalyptic Seattle as one of its locations.

THE HOOVER DAM
2253
Van Buren

■ The original *Fallout 3*, codenamed *Van Buren*, was set to take place across a large map, the bulk of which would have been taken up by Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. The story was to begin with the player escaping prison and would have many and varied endings depending on the player's actions through the game. For example, the Hoover Dam, later to be pivotal to the *New Vegas* plot, could be destroyed.

VAULT ZERO
2197-2198
Fallout Tactics

■ The Midwestern Brotherhood Of Steel launches a campaign to find Vault Zero, the hub of the pre-War vault network, believed to house powerful technology. The campaign begins in the territory surrounding Chicago and pushes west across wastelands controlled by beast lords, mutants, Reavers and a powerful robot army originating from Vault Zero. The Brotherhood finds a nuclear warhead on the way and uses it to breach Vault Zero, which ultimately becomes a major new base of Brotherhood operations.

LOS YBANEZ
2208-2209
Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel

■ A Brotherhood Of Steel Initiate is charged with finding several Brotherhood Paladins who have gone missing from the town of Carbon. The Initiate meets The Vault Dweller (now known as The Wasteland Stranger) who directs him to Los, the location of the mutant's Secret Bunker. There, the initiate finds and defeats Attis, the nefarious mutant general responsible for the disappearing Paladins.

WASHINGTON DC
2277-2278
Fallout 3

■ The Lone Wanderer leaves Vault 101, located in the Capital Wasteland northwest of Washington D.C., in search of his/her father, James. Upon finding him, the Wanderer helps him activate Project Purity, bringing clean water to the Capital Wasteland. James dies trying to prevent The Enclave from taking over Project Purity. The Lone Wanderer also helps The Brotherhood Of Steel activate its giant Liberty Prime robot, which almost single-handedly manages to recapture Project Purity from The Enclave.

FLORIDA
Unknown Date
Fallout Tactics 2

■ The cancelled *Fallout Tactics* sequel was intended to be set in the southeastern states of the US, including Florida, where an irradiated GECK gets used, resulting in a lush, mutated garden full of deadly mutant crocodiles.

TEXAS
Unknown Date
Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel 2

■ This cancelled sequel was to be set in East Texas, taking in locations including Austin, Fort Worth and San Antonio.

NEW ORLEANS
Unknown Date
Fallout 4, maybe

■ The next *Fallout* game hasn't yet been announced, but when we asked Obsidian's Chris Avellone where he thought the series might go next, he said, "Nathaniel Chapman, one of our designers, said '*Fallout: New Orleans*', and that sounded pretty cool to me. If not that, San Francisco would be equally intriguing."

VAULT 13
2161-2162
Fallout: A Post Nuclear Role Playing Game

■ The Vault Dweller is sent out from Vault 13, located about 200 miles southeast of San Francisco, to find a replacement water chip. After retrieving the chip, he defeats The Master and then goes on to destroy the Mariposa Military Base.

LAS VEGAS
2281-2282
Fallout: New Vegas

■ The Hoover Dam has become the single most important choke point in the NCR-Legion War. The New Californian Republic has successfully defended the dam from Caesar's Legion attack once, but the Legion is planning a second, stronger push. Powerful robotics magnate, Mr. House controls the nearby city of New Vegas but realises that whoever wins the NCR-Legion War, will then look to wrest control of his city from him, so he sends for the Platinum Chip required to control his army of Securitron Robots, and ultimately it is The Courier, charged with delivering the chip, who decides the fate of The Hoover Dam and the Mojave Wasteland.

ANCHORAGE [ALASKA]
2077
Operation Anchorage

■ With Canada now completely under its control, the US military is able to mount an effective counter-attack against the invading Chinese forces, attaining victory on 10 January 2077. 100 years later, The Lone Wanderer participates in a virtual reality simulation of a key battle within the Anchorage Reclamation.